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3 February 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Administration)

FROM: Assistant Director (Personnel)

SUBJECT: Oral Examination of Applicants.

1. PROBLEM: To develop machinery through which oral examination procedures may be applied to determine and to advise the Assistant Director for Personnel on the suitability of applicants to fill junior, intermediate, and high level positions in the Central Intelligence Agency.
2. ASSUMPTIONS: (a) All of the means employed by CIA for the selection of personnel should be aimed at bringing into the Agency highly competent, loyal employees who are well motivated to join in performing the Agency's mission.

(b) Since a major objective of the career service program of CIA is to provide opportunities for growth and advancement to individual employees, it is important that incoming personnel have potentialities which measure up to the opportunities available.

(c) Criteria of suitability must be adapted to the career field within which a prospective employee's development and advancement will be made possible.

(d) Forming the best possible estimate of an applicant's suitability for career employment is subject to limitations no matter how well applicants from outside are screened, investigated, and tested. Provision for oral examination or interviewing of applicants, conducted by officials with experience in and knowledge of the Agency's intelligence operations and requirements, will increase the possibilities of employing only those persons who can be relied upon to be effective members of the Agency's work force.

3. FACTS: (a) The Career Service Committee adopted and included in its final report the recommendation of its working group on Trainees that a Professional Selection Panel be established under the direction of the Career Service Board to "review selection standards, including medical standards, for and the qualifications of all candidates up to and including the grade GS-11 for overt and semi-covert professional positions. The Panel will also, when requested by an Assistant Director

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arrange for the testing of a candidate in the GS-12 through GS-15 category, review his qualifications and make recommendations to the requesting Office." (Tab E, CIA [REDACTED])

(b) The schedule of employment processing operations proposed by the Career Service Committee provided for the Professional Selection Panel to hold interviews with candidates in the categories defined above subsequent to testing, personnel screening, medical clearance, and security approval, but in advance of the individual's entry on duty.

(c) In developing its operating plans, the Professional Selection Panel has omitted any proposal for conducting interviews with applicants. The Panel's position appears to have stemmed from the belief that the workload entailed in the adoption of the interviewing step would impose prohibitive demands upon the time of the members, and would entail an undue expenditure of funds to provide transportation for applicants to come to Washington for the interviews.

(d) Pursuant to instructions given it by the Career Service Board, the Panel is concentrating its activities upon (a) the formulation of criteria concerning over-all suitability to work in CIA on a career basis, and (b) the examination of individual cases of applicants or trial service employees where doubt is cast on suitability to work in CIA on a career basis as a result of administrative or marginal information developed by the Inspection and Security, Medical, and Personnel Offices and the Office of Training. Its recommendations with respect to each case are forwarded directly to the Assistant Director (Personnel).

(e) The operations of the Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service were cited by the Career Service Committee in its final report to the DCI as supplying an analogy to the proposed role of the Professional Selection Panel. Actually, oral examinations of Foreign Service applicants are conducted not by the Board members but by the Executive Director of the Board with the assistance of a group of Deputy Examiners chosen annually by the Board. These Deputy Examiners are chosen mainly for their skill in oral testing. (Tab A)

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4. DISCUSSION: (a) Best estimates which can be made with respect to the entry on duty of personnel in grade categories from GS-7 through GS-15, predicated on an Agency ceiling of [REDACTED] are as follows: 25X9A2

(1) GS-7 through GS-11 (including GS-5's who are appointed to junior officer positions) . . . 60

(2) GS-12 through GS-15 30

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An average allotment of one hour per interview would, therefore, comprise an interviewing load of at least 60 and 30 hours [REDACTED] for groups examining these two categories, respectively. It can be assumed that some applicants would not survive the interviewing step; accordingly, workload estimates would be expanded by this factor.

(b) The unwillingness of the Professional Selection Panel to assume the role of an oral examining body can be appreciated, taking into account the fact that the appointed members would have to perform this function. Sixty hours of interviewing time—in addition to their full time duties and responsibilities—would have represented a substantial burden for these members.

(c) The workload of interviewing candidates for positions in grades GS-7 through GS-11 would be considerably less burdensome if distributed among a larger group than the five voting members of the present Selection Panel, by designating Agency officials to serve as interviewers for relatively short periods of time.

(d) The Career Service Committee recommended that the jurisdiction of the panel include individual candidates for positions from GS-12 through GS-15 when requested by the Assistant Director concerned. However, the criteria applied in oral examinations of applicants for middle and senior level positions would be substantially different from those used for junior officer candidates. For the latter group, the interview should be used to furnish the basis for an appraisal of the individual's promise for career development within the area of opportunities afforded by the Agency. For the more senior personnel, the interview must yield an appraisal of the applicant's all-around capabilities and qualifications for intelligence functions. The establishment of separate examining bodies for each of these two categories of applicants would, perhaps accomplish improved interviewing results. Senior level applicants should be evaluated by high level Agency officials whose responsibilities have given them broad perspective of the Agency's requirements.

(e) The present Professional Selection Panel does not appear to rest on sound organizational principles. It is now an appendage of the Career Service Board, which itself has no command function or authority. Nonetheless, CIA [REDACTED] vests in the Panel authority to "finally approve on behalf of the Agency the selection of all professional personnel" up to GS-11. In effect, this statement of function disperses a command responsibility (i.e., appointment authority) to a committee-type Panel which does not exist within the Agency line of command. However, under the provisions of CIA [REDACTED] the Panel's present responsibility is advisory instead of final with respect to the employment of individual applicants.

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(f) Problems encountered by the Foreign Service appear to be relevant for CIA. The Foreign Service's Board of Examiners was established by legislation to function under the general supervision of the Board of the Foreign Service. A report (Tab A) prepared by the Management Staff of the State Department points out that the present dispersion of personnel recruitment and examining responsibility between the Board of Examiners on the one hand, and the Personnel Office on the other has not been conducive to realizing a positive, cohesive personnel program.

5. CONCLUSIONS: (a) Improved personnel selection could be expected to result from installation of a program for interviewing applicants for non-clerical positions by representative groups of Agency officials.

(b) Because of differences in emphasis on selection criteria, separate bases of membership for the interviewing bodies should be established for applicants for junior and intermediate positions on the one hand, and senior positions on the other.

(c) The interviewing bodies should be so organized that the effectiveness of their operations will not be impeded by the demands made upon the time of officials serving as interviewers.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS: (a) That there be established (1) a Senior Officer Examination Board with examining jurisdiction for grades GS-12 and above, and (2) a Junior and Intermediate Examination Board, for grades GS-7 through GS-11 (and lower grades when the candidate is to be a trainee for a professional position.) These Boards would have responsibility for considering the employment suitability of all applicants falling within the prescribed grade ranges. Since the operations of the Professional Selection Panel would be duplicated, the Panel should be discontinued.

(b) That the Senior Officer Examination Board be constituted as an advisory body to the Assistant Director for Personnel, to whom responsibility for exercising the appointment function has been delegated. Membership should be drawn from among chiefs of major organizational components (office head level) and other senior officials occupying positions of not less than grade GS-17. The Board should comprise at least three members. Members should be appointed to serve for six months' tours, with appointments staggered to provide for continuity. The membership of the Board should be as broadly representative of the Agency's major organizational elements as is possible. Whenever deemed necessary, the Board should be authorized to call upon assistance from personnel with specialized backgrounds. Meetings should be held at least once weekly. The Assistant Director (Personnel) would designate a Personnel Officer to serve as Board Secretary and to be available for technical personnel advice and assistance. The Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Directors could at their option participate in the proceedings as ex-officio members.

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(c) That the Junior and Intermediate Examination Board also be constituted on an advisory basis to the Personnel Office. This Board would comprise three members designated from such parts of the Agency as will assure a reasonable degree of Agency-wide representation. As with the Senior Board, members would be appointed for six months, with staggered tours. Membership should be limited to Agency officials in not less than grade GS-15. The Board should be convened on a weekly basis to dispose of all pending cases. A Personnel Officer would be named to provide Secretariat duties and to give such technical personnel advice as might be required. As in (b) above, the Board should be authorized to call upon expert assistance. Similarly, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Directors could participate in the work of the Board on an ex-officio capacity.

(d) That instructions issued to establish the Boards insure regular participation by the appointed members; although the workload will unavoidably add a sizeable burden upon Board members, the effectiveness of the oral examining program will depend heavily upon the quality of the Board's work.

(e) That where the Assistant Director (Personnel) feels a course of action should be taken which would be different from that recommended by either of the two boards proposed above, he would present the case to the Deputy Director (Administration) for final decision.

(f) Recognizing that the oral examination represents another step in the employment processing operation, applicants should be brought to Washington at Government expense for the purpose of appearing before the appropriate oral examining Board. Although the polygraphing of applicants prior to oral interviews with the Board would sometimes eliminate the necessity for further examination, it would also run the risk of upsetting some persons prior to their appearance before the Board. Polygraphing, however, should be handled before the individual returns to his home. Derogatory information elicited through the polygraph process might, of course, require reconsideration of the applicant by the Board. Transportation expenses to carry on this program would entail an estimated annual Agency expenditure of \$180,000.

/s/ W. H. H. Morris, Jr.
W. H. H. MORRIS, JR.
Assistant Director (Personnel)

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